



Pause. Listen. Act. be You.

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MONDAY 5.9.22

Lego my Egos

Scripture: Eccl. 7:23-29

No amount of wisdom can prevent bad things from happening because we don't have that level of control over our lives. In fact, wisdom, in and of itself, has little value except how we utilize that wisdom. Ecclesiastes reminds us humility is one of the most important values.

- How does our own ego cause us problems?
- How do we under or overestimate our own wisdom?

Prayer: God, help us to remember you have created us just the way we are, with the wisdom and clarity to know that is not necessarily perfect. Remind us where we are dependent upon you. Amen.

TUESDAY 5.10.22

Insecurity Problems

Scripture: James 3:1-12

Our tongues often run away with our hearts. Perhaps the best piece of advice is one attributed to Aaron Burr in the musical *Hamilton*, "Talk less, smile more". It takes courage to listen for God's voice instead of speak our own thoughts into the silence.

- How does our insecurity cause us problems?
- Sometimes we are called to speak out. How do we know it is God speaking and not our own ideas?

Prayer: Faith giving God, help us remember we are valuable and important, even when the world tells us we are not. Enable to act out of security in your love, not the insecurity of society's assigned value. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 5.11.22

I Don't Like It

Scripture: Acts 17:16-31

Luke makes Paul look like the world's best speaker, which is likely an attempt to make Paul look better and more effective. However, Paul was a talented speaker who actively searched for clues about how to explain the gospel to people with no background in the Jewish tradition. In the same way, the church is challenged to not just stand in contrast to society, nor to be overwhelmed by it, but to speak in ways society and culture can understand.

- How should people of faith interact with "the world" and its culture?
- We don't have to like what others do, but Paul challenged his followers to accept the reality of those behaviors and ideas in order to be able to more effectively spread the gospel. How does your experience with others prevent you from being a good advocate for God?

Prayer: Holy and loving God, we often only accept or acknowledge those who act just like us or agree with everything we think. Help us to see the people behind the issues and speak in ways which spread your gospel of love. Amen.

THURSDAY 5.12.22

Value Deflation

Scripture: Job 31:13-15

Job literally became a cliché, even though his experience was meant to be a singular example to all of history. Despite all of the physical things which happened to him, the worst part of his suffering - by far - was the scorn of his friends and family. They wanted him to abandon God, but he knew he had value in God's eyes.

- How do we unintentionally diminish others value or heap scorn on them? Are there times you have made the situation worse for them?
- Job wanted to be unique in his suffering so he couldn't accept help. When have you wanted the same thing?

Prayer: God, you tell us we are your child. Help us to hear and share the stories which shape a life of service, generosity, open hearts, and strong minds. Amen.

FRIDAY 5.13.22

Picking and Choosing

Scripture: Matthew 20:20-28

Matthew's Jesus is always warning people to "be careful what they wish for". In this passage, Jesus tells the people that to follow him into glory meant they would have to accept suffering on the behalf of other people. God's kingdom is often upside down. What we hold to be important is often the opposite of where God sees value.

- How do we assign too much value to the wrong kind of people?
- How do we discover how God sees people? When do we diminish others as not important or unvaluable?

Prayer: God of the outcast, help us to see where others have something important to say and to see them in your light. Amen.

SATURDAY 5.14.22

Living in the Way

Scripture: Romans 12:9-21

This passage lays out the Mission of the Church- what sets the community of Jesus apart and grounds our actions, preaching, teaching, programs and proclamation. The current lack of cultural significance is, perhaps, something to be celebrated, not mourned as it forces us to "define" our identity and character. The life of faith is not an invitation into a community or a program, but an invitation to a way of life and being in the world.

- How quickly do we jump to the assumption that someone's motives are evil or mis-intentioned or simply wrong?
- How might we bless the world and national leaders who are persecuting people- what would that look like?

Prayer: Jesus, Love which does not reject evil is not genuine. Help us to reject hateful ideology, language and actions that deny humanity and prevents others from living fully and freely as God intended. Amen.